

INTERNATIONAL JOINT COMMISSION

U.S. Section Office

1717 H Street NW, Suite 835

Washington DC 20006

December 2023 Executive Meeting Minutes – December 08, 2023

The International Joint Commission (IJC) met in Executive Session (in-person, with virtual participation also facilitated) on Friday, December 08, 2023, from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM EDT, with Gerald Acker in the Chair.

COMMISSIONERS

Gerald Acker, Chair, US Section

Robert Sisson, US Section

Lance Yohe, US Section

Merrell-Ann Phare, Canadian Section

Henry Lickers, Canadian Section

SECTION OFFICES

Susan Daniel, Secretary, U.S. Section

Christopher Wilkie, Secretary, Canadian Section

Allison Arbuthnot, Student Intern, U.S. Section

Glenn Benoy, Director, Sciences and Engineering, Canadian Section

Mark Colosimo, Director Science and Engineering, U.S. Section

John Allis, Engineering Advisor, U.S. Section

Rob Caldwell, Senior Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section

Kevin Bunch, Writer-Communications Specialist, U.S. Section (contractor)

Christina Chiasson, Policy & Communications Advisor, Canadian Section

Celine Desjardins, Project Officer, Canadian Section

Tia Dumoulin, Communications Advisor, Canadian Section

Oliver Dumville, Senior Policy Advisor, Canadian Section

Alexandria Farrell, Environmental Officer, Canadian Section

David Fay, Senior Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section

Kathey-Lee Galvin, Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Section

Athena Goodale, IWI Student, Canadian Section

Adam Greeley, Science Advisor, U.S. Section

Shenice Gross, Network Administrator, U.S. Section (contractor)

David Hermann, Sr. Policy Advisor (contractor)

Jeff Kart, Executive Editor, IJC Newsletters, U.S. Section (contractor)

Erika Klyszejko, Engineering Advisor, Canadian Section

Jeff Laberge, Information Management Analyst, Canadian Section

Michael Laitta, Senior Physical Science Adviser/GIS Coordinator, U.S. Section

Catherine Lee-Johnston, Environmental Advisor, Canadian Section

Sarah Lobrichon, Public Affairs Manager, Canadian Section

Semra Mesulam, Legal Advisor, U.S. Section

Diana Moczula, Junior Policy Advisor, Canadian Section

Christian Moreau, IT Support Analyst, Canadian Section

Isabelle Reid, Executive Assistant, Canadian Section

Lyne Sabourin, Senior Water Quality and Ecosystem Advisor, Canadian Section
Avni Solanki, AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, U.S. Section
Derek Spelay, Administrative Assistant, Canadian Section
Yon Trimble, Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. Section
Ed Virden, Public Affairs Officer, Public Affairs, U.S. Section
Jo Werba, AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, U.S. Section
John Yee, Chief, IM and IT Services, Canadian Section

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL OFFICE STAFF

Heather Stirratt, Director
Antonette Arvai, Physical Scientist
Raj Bejankiwar, Physical Scientist
Mark Burrows, Physical Scientist
Matthew Child, Physical Scientist
Lizhu Wang, Biological Scientist
Rajendra Poudel, Economist
Laura Sabra, Administrative Officer
Sandra Svoboda, Public Affairs Specialist
Diane Varosky, Administrative Coordinator
John Wilson, Physical Scientist
Rachel Wyatt, Communications Officer

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioners approved the agenda for the Spring 2024 Semi-Annual Meeting.

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Commissioners approved the minutes of the October 2023 Semi-Annual Meeting.

3. 2024 SCHEDULE OF IJC MEETINGS

The Executive Meeting in February 2024 is planned to be in-person in Ottawa. Spring Semi-Annual will be in Washington, D.C. April 8-12, 2024. The dates for the September Executive Meeting and Fall Semi-Annual Meeting are to be determined at a later time. At the February 2024 Executive Meeting, staff are to present options for a field location and activities surrounding the June 2024 Executive Meeting.

4. CYBER SECURITY INCIDENT

Staff updated Commissioners on status of recommendations to improve cyber security.

5. INTERNATIONAL WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE

Commissioners approved staff transmitting, via email, a high-level abstract of the IWI 25th Anniversary Showcase report to governments. Commissioners also approved sending a response letter to Seabridge and requested a memo for Commissioners' information with additional background on the initial Seabridge letter. Staff provided an update on Pilot International Watershed Board scoping activities including meetings held or scheduled with various organizations and engaging with Indigenous communities. Staff detailed plans to deliver a recommendations report to Commissioners at the February

2024 Executive Meeting regarding the feasibility, appropriateness and level of basin interest in the idea of establishing a pilot watershed board in the Osoyoos basin. Commissioners agreed. Staff also indicated the IJC 21st Century Report reprint will be published the week of December 18, 2023. Commissioners asked staff to provide an analysis on how to better explain IWI funding to boards to create a stronger link with the IWI goal and objectives.

6. INTERNATIONAL KOOTENAY LAKE BOARD OF CONTROL

Staff provided an update on the Board's November letter to the Commission requesting delays to several Board initiatives. Commissioners expressed support for adding Indigenous community members to the board in the near-term and were willing to hold off on the further board expansion efforts if it would help the Board better manage the other priority initiatives. Commissioners supported further board expansion being investigated during the review of the 1938 Order, either as part of that study or part of a parallel effort evaluating board governance needs. Staff is to discuss with the board the compromise of delaying board expansion (beyond perhaps the near-term addition of Indigenous community members), while generally keeping the IJC's proposed timeline for Plan of Study development and conducting the Commission's Review of its Orders. Commissioners agreed with continuing with the Commission's desired timing for the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment activities, as well as IWI scoping activities as planned.

7. POPLAR RIVER AND BIG MUDDY BASINS

Commissioners approved a draft Terms of Reference for the Poplar River and Big Muddy Creek Task Force and to have staff bring forward nominees to serve as task force co-chairs by Dec. 31 for Commissioner consideration. Commissioners approved the Terms of Reference with the addition of an Indigenous representation requirement.

8. INTERNATIONAL SOURIS RIVER BOARD

Staff noted that a meeting with the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency is scheduled for Jan. 22 in Regina, to be attended by Commissioners Yohe and Phare. In addition, staff had a call with board co-chairs on October 12 to discuss co-chair's queries from the June 27 meeting that concerned several items, e.g., board membership parity, consensus, and oversight. The call went well and helped clarify several matters for them and asked that staff share the presentation deck when ready. Staff also noted that on November 30, they received an oral debrief of the Designated Entity's (DE) first meeting in Estevan on November 28-30. The DEs, along with several other basin agencies, met to tour the reservoirs in Saskatchewan and work through roles and responsibilities for operation of reservoirs throughout the basin under different scenarios and to discuss the WSA's current lack of board participation.

9. INTERNATIONAL RAINY-LAKE OF THE WOODS WATERSHED BOARD

Commissioners approved a Temporary Supplementary Order, which provides for a single rule curve for Rainy Lake for the 2024 freshet and beyond. . The Temporary Supplementary Order will provide the Water Levels Committee and the Watershed Board with additional time to assess the performance of the single rule curve and to secure public input on the single rule curve for consideration by the Commission. Staff also noted the U.S. Co-chair for the International Red River Watershed Board, the International Rainy - Lake of the Woods Watershed Board and the Water Levels Committee will soon be deployed for three to four months. Staff noted a letter is forthcoming to the Commission indicating this and recommending an interim U.S. member. Staff advised there are seven appointment requests pending before the Commission. The Commission plans to discuss these issues next week.

10. INTERNATIONAL ST. MARY AND MILK RIVERS STUDY BOARD

Staff presented a summary of recent meetings and progress by the technical teams of the Study, including a description of the preliminary administrative and structural options that will be modeled for the Study Board's consideration. Staff noted that the Study Board's next newsletter is going out the week of December 11.

11. TRIENNIAL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS (TAP) REPORT COMMUNICATIONS

GLRO expects to have a completed TAP engagement report ready after the New Year. Preliminary results were presented for a news conference webinar. Recommendations from the report received a positive reception. Specifically, there was overwhelming support for the recommendation that Indigenous communities be included in the discussions for updating the GLWQA (Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement). The news conference on the TAP report was streamed via YouTube, Facebook and the IJC's website; engagement there suggests that people have been viewing after the news conference rather than when it was streaming live. GLRO Director presented on the TAP at the GLEC (Great Lakes Executive Committee) conference last week and will be appearing on an Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant podcast next week on the same topic.

12. COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

IJC staff are working with Boards to develop/update communications plans and with the ILOSLR Board to update its learning modules that date back to 2012. Lake Superior and Red River boards have meetings coming up in December/January. ECCC and EPA will be releasing a report on the AQA in March 2024, and Commissioners should be reviewing the IJC's synthesis letter, a summary of public comments, for submittal next week. The special edition newsletter on IWI and TAP was very well received by the public.

13. GREAT LAKES - ST LAWRENCE RIVER ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

GLAM technical teams continue to hold virtual workshops with the PAG (Public Advisory Group) on the Phase 2 expedited review. A plan evaluation workshop is being scheduled for Feb. 6-8 in Quebec City to review the required input and framework for plan evaluation and conduct a practice end-to-end plan evaluation using initial test plans developed by the Plan Formulation Team. Ottawa IJC February executive meeting dates may need to be shifted to accommodate staff traveling to Quebec City for this workshop. Several GLAM members have expiring terms and Commissioners can expect to see reappointment letters.

14. INDIGENOUS COLLABORATION TEAM

ICT staff requested a decision on the Circle of Experts (COE) proposal, which would create an advisory group to provide the Commission with feedback and advice. Commissioners were supportive but had questions regarding the geographical scope, the size, and the budgeting for the circle of advisors. Commissioners agreed to meet with the ICT to discuss the remaining questions (geographical scope, the size, and the budgeting) before confirming an approach.

15. PROTECTION OF THE WATERS OF THE GREAT LAKES

Staff updated the Commission on work to scope the study for the PWGL ten-year update report. Commissioners supported the staff recommendation for the second ten-year study to focus on the Great Lakes basin. Given the broader scope of the original reference and uncertainty regarding withdrawals, consumptive uses and diversions of water in other transboundary basins, staff proposed to, separately

from the PWGL ten-year review, undertake a survey of IJC board members in other basins. Staff will discuss internally, and propose next steps to Commissioners.

16. OTHER BUSINESS

None

Decisions to be recorded in the minutes of the December 8, 2023, Executive Meeting

Science Advisory Board - Research Coordinating Committee

On November 1, 2023 Commissioners approved the following reappointments:

- a. Ms. Deborah Lee as a U.S. member of SAB-RCC for a three-year period starting October 1, 2023 and ending September 30, 2026.
- b. Ms. Sandra Eberts as a U.S. SAB-RCC member for a three-year period starting November 1, 2023 and ending September 30, 2026.

International Osoyoos Board of Control

On November 11, 2023 Commissioners approved a letter to Osoyoos Board Co-Chairs on Zosel Dam Upgrades. During the discussion with the board at the October Semi-annual the Commission requested that the board report back on the planned upgrades to the dam. The letter requests the board provide an assessment of potential impacts to the Commission's order at the April Semi-Annual meeting.

Original signed by:

Christopher Wilkie
Secretary
Canadian Section

Susan Daniel
Secretary
United States Section